

Writing Tutors

CWAA Writing Tutors are also referred to as Peer Tutors, but these tutors have one extra requirement: they must first pass WRI369 to become a Peer Writing Tutor. However, they still must attend biweekly trainings and use TutorTrac for appointments, scheduling and logging work hours.

I. Introductions

Be aware of your scheduled appointments. Wear your name tag so the tutee will recognize you.

Remember, this might be the first time the student has visited the CWAA and they could be apprehensive about tutoring. Be welcoming and introduce yourself.

II. The First Session

Ask the student about his or her expectations and goals for seeking a tutor:

What kinds of problems or difficulties is the student having with the assignment?

Has he or she had any of these types of problems with other assignments?

Explain, if appropriate, your role as a Peer Tutor and what your goals and responsibilities are for each appointment. Be clear about the type of assistance you can provide.

III. To start the appointment

Start with the tutee's questions concerning the course or assignment.

Pay attention to the tutee's attitude. Is she or he frustrated or anxious? Your appointment may be more productive if you try to address these feelings first. Assess the situation.

Ask questions about the assignment and writing process:

What assignment are you working on?

How much work have you already put into the paper?

Which parts of the paper are you concerned about?

Make a plan for the appointment. Be realistic. How much can you cover during the allotted time? Decide together what the focus of the session should be.

IV. During the appointment

The most effective way for the student to learn is to let him or her do the work.

Ask questions that will guide the student through the writing process. Present information differently based on the learning styles, such as visually (a chart), or auditory (discuss concepts out loud). You may need to model appropriate strategies, but then step back and let the tutee try it on his or her own.

Ask for the student's input:

Does she or he understand?

What remains unclear?

Are you being helpful?

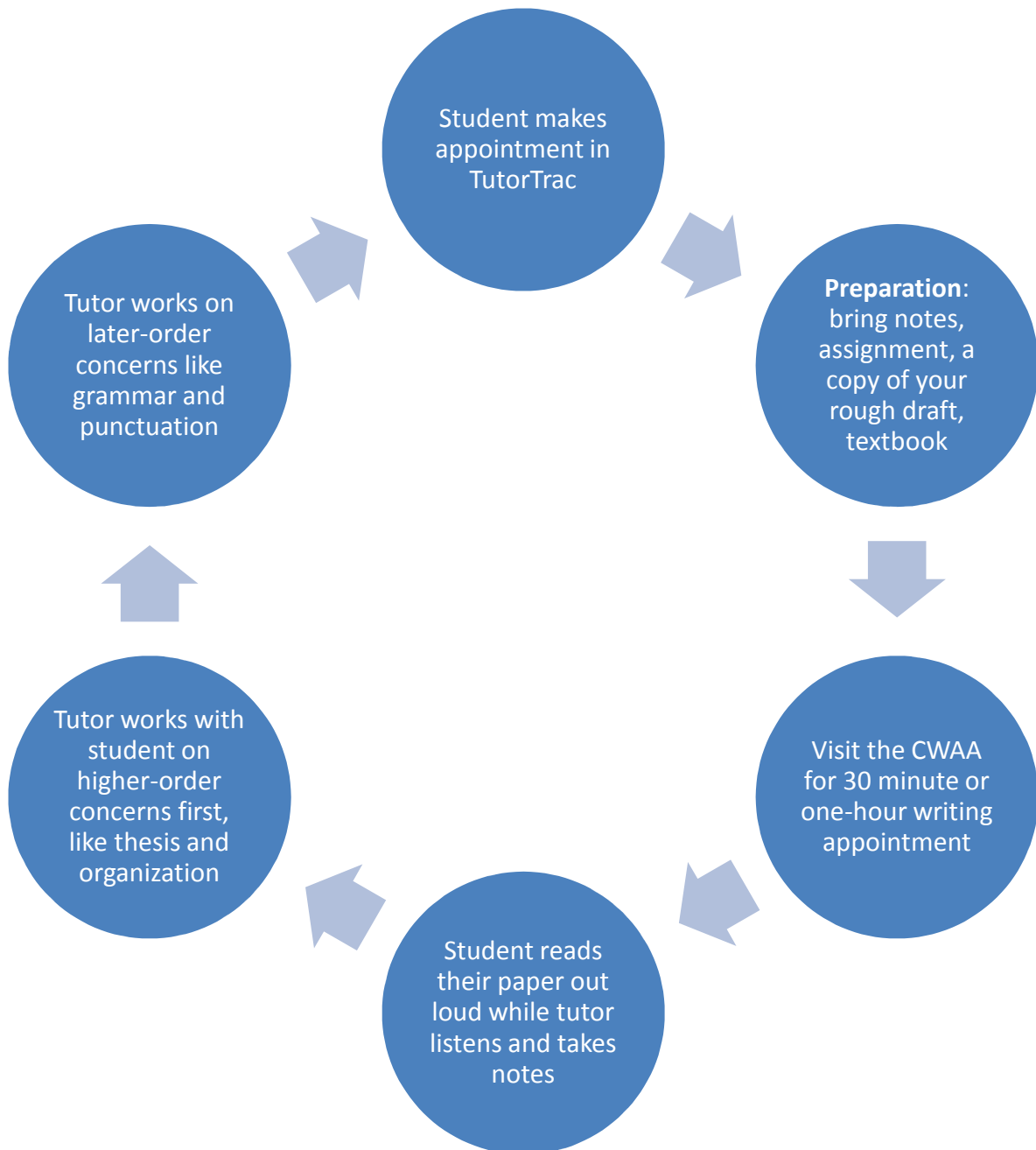
What would be more helpful?

V. To end the appointment

Have the tutee summarize the information you covered.

Ask them what the next steps are.

Student Writing Tutoring Appointment Cycle



Strategies for Writing Tutors

Plagiarism: When plagiarism occurs, it is oftentimes unintentional and due to lack of knowledge about proper citations and procedures. In these instances, give the student information about different methods of citation, along with examples of ways to paraphrase, in order to fix the problem. However, if a student deliberately plagiarizes, it is important that you report him or her to the Director.

Citations: If a student requests help with a citation method you are not familiar with, make sure to consult a manual or some other official guidebook, before answering their question. The citation guides made available by the library are one example of an effective resource. Also, if you are still unsure after looking at a book, recommend that the student ask a reference librarian for help. You can walk the student downstairs, or call the reference desk at 508-565-1103.

Early Due Dates: When a student brings in a paper due the next day, or even in a few hours, it is important to adjust your tutoring style. Talk with the student candidly about how much time they have to spend on revisions. Still address major structural issues, but organize the session with these time constraints in mind in order to avoid overwhelming the student. Also, suggest that they make an appointment earlier next time.

Passive Students: It is important that students take an active role in their own learning. When dealing with a student who tries to get you to do most of the work, try employing certain techniques, such as refusing to hold the pen or asking questions to engage them in the session. If this does not work, it might be necessary to politely remind students that they are ultimately responsible for their own work.

Monopolizing Time: Do not let sessions run more than an hour or so. Appointments longer than this are too draining for both the tutor and student and are usually less productive. As a tutor, it is your job to give the session a definitive beginning, middle, and end. If the student seems unwilling to leave, use direct cues, such as asking “did the session help you?” or by standing up, to signal that the session is over. If you reach the end of a session and feel like the student still has a lot of work that needs to be done, it may be helpful to give them three things to work on and suggest making another appointment.

Discussing Faculty: Students oftentimes let out their frustrations by complaining to tutors about professors. It is important to make the student feel comfortable in the Center, but avoid agreeing with the student just to make them feel better. Do not talk negatively about a member of the faculty or criticize their grading; instead suggest that the student discuss the grade with the professor.

ESL (English Second Language) Students: Although it might seem necessary to devote most of a session involving an ELL to grammatical issues, this is not always the best course of action. Even if a paper seems to have many grammatical errors, it is still important to discuss more critical structural problems before addressing them. A grammatically perfect, but structurally flawed essay is not desirable. When you do discuss grammar, don't be intimidated if the ELL knows the proper terms for English conventions. Just explain the concept in terms that make sense to you and consult a handbook when necessary.¹

¹ Gillespie, Paula, and Neal Lerner *The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring 2nd ed.* New York: Pearson Longman, 2008.

Quick Grammar Review for Writing Tutors

Comma Splice: A comma splice occurs when a comma is incorrectly used in place of more forceful punctuation to join two or more independent clauses. An example of a comma splice is the sentence: *I want to do well in school, my parents will be happy.* Both “I want to do well in school” and “my parents will be happy” are independent clauses that could exist as their own sentence. When a comma splice occurs, replacing it with a period or semicolon, or rewording the sentence, can fix the problem. For example, the previous example sentence could be fixed by saying: *I want to do well in school. My parents will be happy.* It could also read: *I want to do well in school; my parents will be happy.* Lastly, the sentence could be rewritten to say: *If I do well in school, my parents will be happy.* In this instance, “my parents will be happy” is still an independent clause, but “if I do well in school” is a dependent clause; therefore, since they could not be two separate sentences, this is not a comma splice.

Run-on sentence: Like a comma splice, a run-on sentence combines two or more independent clauses without proper punctuation. The sentence: *I want to do well in school my parents will be happy* is an example of this type of error. The solutions for fixing a comma splice, listed above, also work for this type of mistake. Also, a long sentence is not necessarily synonymous with a run-on sentence, so it is important to differentiate between the two.

General Comma Usage: There are many appropriate instances to use a comma. Commas should be used to separate items in a list consisting of three or more items and placed before introductory phrases. They also are used with conjunctions, such as “but”, “and”, “etc.”, and to set off additional pieces of information in a sentence. For example, consider the sentence: *Joanna, who is on the track team, completed a marathon this weekend.* Commas are necessary here because “who is on the track team” is not a piece of crucial information to the sentence, but rather a secondary thought. Commas are also used to separate multiple adjectives that describe the same noun (ex. *The tall, redheaded girl*). Consult a handbook for a more detailed review of comma usage.

Semicolon: Semicolons are one type of punctuation that can be used to link two independent clauses together. They are used when no connecting word (and, but, etc.) exists and with conjunctive adverbs (however, moreover, etc.). For example, a semicolon is appropriate in the next sentence because it does not have a word that connects the two independent phrases: *I bought a new book; I love to read.*

Active/Passive Voice: The active voice occurs when the subject performs the action described by the verb. An example of an active voice sentence is: *I watched the Red-Sox game.* The passive voice occurs when the subject is being acted upon by the verb. An example of a passive voice sentence is: *The Red-Sox game was watched by me.* In general, it is much more concise and effective to use active voice. However, some types of writing, especially writing in the sciences, require using the passive voice.